

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ADDIS 03513 110824Z
ACTION AID-31

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9354

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAID, ASEC, ET
SUBJ: DIFFICULTIES OF AID CONTRACT EMPLOYEES IN CARRYING
OUT DUTIES IN ETHIOPIA; EMBASSY DEMARCHE

REF: ADDIS ABABA 3488

1. EMBASSY HAD BECOME INCREASINGLY CONCERNED IN RECENT WEEKS
OVER OUTRIGHT HARASSMENT OF AND OTHER UNDUE IMPEDIMENTS TO
AID CONTRACT EMPLOYEES IN CARRYING OUT THEIR DUTIES, PART-
ICULARLY OUTSIDE ADDIS ABABA. CONSEQUENTLY, DURING MEETING
AUG 9 WITH FOREIGN MINISTER FELEKE ON SEVERAL SUBJECTS
(SEPTEL) AMBASSADOR LEFT FORMAL DIPLOMATIC NOTE REQUESTING:

A. MINISTRY'S ASSISTANCE IN OBTAINING ASSURANCES FROM
APPROPRIATE OFFICIALS THAT PERSONNEL HIRED UNDER CONTRACT
BY USAID IN ETHIOPIA BE PERMITTED TO CARRY OUT THEIR DUTIES
NOT ONLY WITHOUT HARASSMENT BUT WITH FULL COOPERATION AND
ASSISTANCE OF LOCAL OFFICIALS;

B. AN EXPLANATION FROM THE MINISTRY WHY DAREN MARKARIAN
(REFTEL) WAS SUBJECTED TO ARREST AND HUMILIATING TREATMENT
AMOUNTING TO UNDUE HARASSMENT; AND SUGGESTING

C. A CIRCULAR INSTRUCTION BE ISSUED TO ALL REGIONAL ADMIN-
ISTRATORS, AWRAJA GOVERNORS AND OTHER LOCAL OFFICIALS TO
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PAGE 02 ADDIS 03513 110824Z

COOPERATE WITH USG EMPLOYEES AND CONTRACTORS WORKING ON
PROJECTS, MUTUALLY AGREED UPON BETWEEN USG AND PMGSE.

2. AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT TO FELEKE THAT IT IS DIFFICULT TO
UNDERSTAND HOW, JUST THREE DAYS AFTER SIGNING OF \$4 MILLION
UPPER DIDESA PROJECT, ETHIOPIAN OFFICIALS DETAINED USAID
CONTRACT EMPLOYEE MARKARIAN AT GUN POINT IN NAZRET, HELD

HIM OVERNIGHT, BROUGHT HIM UNDER GUARD TO ADDIS, SUBJECTED HIM TO INTENSE INTERROGATION, RELEASED HIM ONLY PROVISIONALLY, AND STILL HAVE NOT PERMITTED HIM TO RETURN HOME IN NAZRET, EVEN TO PICK UP CLEAN CLOTHES. HE HAD NOT EVEN BEEN ALLOWED TO INITIATE CONTACT WITH CONSULAR OFFICER. AMBASSADOR THEN EXPLAINED THAT MARKARIAN HAD BEEN IN POSSESSION OF TWO-WAY RADIO DULY LICENSED BY DMGSE WHICH SEEMED TO BE REASON FOR HIS ARREST. SUCH RADIOS, THOUGH NOT BEING USED CURRENTLY WHILE OVERALL ISSUE IS BEING DISCUSSED AMONG USAID, RELIEF AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITIES, ARE IMPORTANT IF USAID OFFICIALS ARE TO WORK IN THE FIELD ON PROJECTS DESIRED BY AND AGREED TO FORMALLY BY ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT.

3. AMBASSADOR FURTHER POINTED OUT THAT, OF THREE USAID CONTRACTORS ASSIGNED TO ETHIOPIA, NONE IS TODAY IN THE FIELD FULL TIME, PRIMARILY BECAUSE OF THEIR ANXIETY FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF OTHER IMPEDIMENTS TO THEIR FUNCTIONING EFFECTIVELY. AS A RESULT OF THE MARKARIAN INCIDENT, THE OTHER CONTRACTOR WORKING IN NAZRET, ABDEL MOUSTAFA, HAS HAD TO BRING HIS WIFE TO ADDIS OUT OF FEAR FOR HER SAFETY IN THE FIELD. HE WILL NOW START TRAVELLING BACK AND FORTH EVERY WEEK-END, AND THIS WILL CUT DOWN ON WHAT HE CAN ACCOMPLISH FOR THE BENEFIT OF ETHIOPIA. THE OTHER CONTRACTOR, TEX BOGGS IN ARBA MINCH, HAS DECIDED TO QUIT, PARTIALLY BECAUSE OF ADMINISTRATIVE FRUSTRATIONS, BUT ALSO BECAUSE HE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 ADDIS 03513 110824Z

HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO GET THE EXIT/REENTRY PERMIT REQUESTED BY USAID OR A REGULAR PASS TO PERMIT HIM TO MOVE FREELY BETWEEN HIS BASE AT ARBA MINCH AND ADDIS. AMBASSADOR CONCLUDED THIS PART OF SESSION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER WITH A REPEAT OF ASSERTION THAT ETHIOPIAN-REQUESTED AID PROJECTS, SUCH AS JUST-SIGNED UPPER DIDESA, WHICH CALLS FOR THREE TECHNICIANS IN FIELD, SIMPLY CANNOT GO FORWARD WITHOUT ACTIVE ETHIOPIAN COOPERATION AND ABSENCE OF HARASSMENT AT ALL LEVELS.

4. FELEKE OBVIOUSLY UNDERSTOOD AMBASSADOR'S POINTS AND TOOK NOTES BUT PROMISED NOTHING MORE THAN TO LOOK INTO NAZRET INCIDENT OUTLINED IN NOTE LEFT WITH HIM. IN LAST ANALYSIS, ABILITY OF USAID PERSONNEL TO WORK IN FIELD EFFECTIVELY WILL DEPEND ON POLITICAL ATTITUDES VIS-A-VIS UNITED STATES EMANATING FROM HIGHEST LEVELS IN PMGSE, THEIR PROPOGATION TO LOWER LEVELS OF OFFICIALDOM, AND FINALLY MORE EFFECTIVE CENTRAL CONTROL OF SECURITY APPARATUS. WITH ALL THE GOOD WILL IN THE WORLD, FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS CANNOT AT THIS POINT BE EXPECTED TO BE ABLE TO TRANSLATE OUR AND THEIR CONCERNS TO LOCAL LEVELS -- BUT WE WILL CONTINUE TO WORK ON TURNING SIGNS OF RENEWED INTEREST IN A MORE BALANCED RELATIONSHIP AT TOP LEVELS INTO MORE CONCRETE COOPERATION AT THE LOWER ONES.

5. POUCHING COPIES OF EMBASSY NOTE TO AF/E, SCS AND AID
ETHIOPIA DESK OFFICER.
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